

Amateurs in Action

Recounts of ham radio operators who have used their time and skills to help others in a time of need



In trouble on Mt. Flora

Brad Byland WA6MM is an avid SOTA (Summits On The Air) activator, as you can tell by his long rap sheet he's posted on [his QRZ page](#). On 17 May 2015, Brad was preparing to climb [Colorado's Mt. Flora](#), which would have been his 29th SOTA activation, by studying maps, reports, and the weather. When he embarked on the hike, Brad made sure he had his essentials, which included his iPhone, a compass, and an HT (handheld ham radio transceiver).

Things went smoothly until about 12,700 feet, when deteriorating visibility convinced Brad to turn back. Soon, he was in total whiteout, lost any perception of direction and elevation, and couldn't read his iPhone or compass. He started following the basic heading on the ridge, when suddenly he felt like he was floating. Turned out Brad was falling, and he landed on a ledge some twenty feet down. To his surprise, he had suffered no injuries.

At first, Brad wanted to wait out the storm, but he knew that if he needed help, the Alpine SAR (search-and-rescue) team would need the time to gear up, so he thought about doing a self-rescue. Stopping to consider that plan a little more clearly, Brad knew that was also not a wise option. But, then he remembered his HT, into which he had previously programmed several nearby mountain repeaters. Brad called out for help on the repeater system.

Almost right away, Mike Doe KCØCNT answered the call, alerted 911, and soon began relaying location and health information to Alpine SAR. More than five hours later, Brad was rescued from the ledge by Alpine SAR, and was safe and in good spirits. *Words alone cannot express my feelings of gratitude for the work you do and the countless hours you invest in this service*, Brad said. *My donations are forthcoming!* He also expressed gratitude to Mike and the other hams who picked up the distress call in the first place. *The outcome would have certainly been different without their help.*



The Alpine Rescue Team



Brad in a selfie on the ledge

By the way, three weeks later, Brad tried again, and successfully summited and activated Mt. Flora. You can read more about Brad's harrowing adventure on the [Sky-Hi News](#) and [ARRL](#).